

Message Text

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TAGS: SCUL, QA

SUBJ: OPENING OF QATAR NATIONAL MUSEUM

1. NEW QATAR NATIONAL MUSEUM WAS INAUGURATED ON JUNE 23 BY THE AMIR, SHAYKH KHALIFA BIN HAMAD AL THANI. THE OPENING WAS ATTENDED BY DELEGATIONS FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, RANKING GOVT OFFICIALS, MEMBERS OF THENJIPLOMATIC CORPS, PROMINENT BUSINESS FIGURES, AND A NUMBER OF FOREIGN SCHOLARS AND EXPERTS WHO HAVE ASSISTED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MUSEUM. ALSO INVITED WERE REPS OF INTERNATIONAL PRESS. INAUGURAL FESTIVITIES INCLUDED A RECEPTION, BANQUET AND FIRST LIVE FOLKLORE PRESENTATION EVER STAGED IN QATAR.

2. THE MUSEUM SITE INCLUDES A FORMER AMIRI PALACE ORIGINALLY CONSTRUCTED IN THE MID NINETEENTH CENTURY AND NOW BEAUTIFULLY RESTORED. CONSTRUCTION OF THE MUSEUM ITSELF AND RESTORATION OF THE OIL BUILDINGS BEGAN IN 1972 AND WAS RECENTLY COMPLETED AT A TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF \$1.5 MILLION. MUSEUM EXHIBITS INCLUDE A NUMBER OF PREHISTORIC ARTIFACTS FOUND BY THE DANISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSIONS OF 1958-1964 AND THE BRITISH MISSION OF 1973-74, BUT ALSO HAS AN IMPRESSIVE ARRAY OF COSTUMES, FURNITURE, JEWELLERY AND PHOTOGRAPHS DEPICTING THE EVOLUTION OF QATARI LIFESTYLES, BOTH NOMADIC AND SETTLED. A
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NUMBER OF THE EXHIBITS ARE DEVOTED TO THE HISTORY OF THE

BEDOUIN, WHO ARE NOW FAST DISAPPEARING. INCLUDED IN THESE EXHIBITS IS AN EXCELLENT DOCUMENTARY FILM OF A BEDOUIN FAMILY ON THE MARCH MADE BY THE DANISH MISSION.

3. THE MUSEUM COMPLEX WILL EVENTUALLY INCLUDE A MARITIME MUSEUM WHICH WILL CONTAIN AN AQUARIUM OF MARINE LIFE IN THE GULF AND SERVE AS A BASE FOR RESEARCH IN THIS FIELD. AN ARTIFICIAL LAGOON HAS BEEN CONSTRUCTED ADJACENT TO THE MUSEUM, CONTAINING SIX FULL SCALE REPLICAS OF VARIOUS TYPES OF DHOWS USED FOR FISHING, TRADING AND PEARLING.

4. COMMENT: MUSEUM IS MOST IMPRESSIVE ACHIEVEMENT, PARTICULARLY EMPHASIS ON CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY AS WELL AS ARCHAEOLOGY. AMIR TOOK GREAT PERSONAL INTEREST IN THIS PROJECT, AND A NUMBER OF EUROPEAN EXPERTS WERE BROUGHT IN TO SERVE AS CONSULTANTS FOR VARIOUS PHASES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSEUM INCLUDING THE SELECTION AND ARRANGEMENT OF DISPLAYS. THE RESULTS ARE WELL WORTH THE EFFORT AND EXPENSE. DISPLAYS AND FILMS ON BEDOUIN LIFE MAY WELL BE UNIQUE IN WORLD, AND PRESERVE VIEWS OF WAY OF LIFE THAT HAS ALREADY ALMOST DISAPPEARED IN QATAR, AND IS RAPIDLY ON WANE IN ENTIRE AREA.
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